



## Mosquitoes and Flooding: Is Your Risk From West Nile virus Increased?

Heavy rainfall and standing water have created concern about the rapid growth of mosquitoes and the increased risk for contracting West Nile virus (WNV).

The South Dakota Department of Health (SDDOH), the South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDOA) and South Dakota State University (SDSU) have been working cooperatively for several years to identify the mosquitoes and the times of the year mosquitoes are most likely to transmit West Nile virus.

### Key points from the research

1. The two most common mosquitoes in South Dakota are the encephalitis (*Culex tarsalis*) and the floodwater mosquito (*Aedes vexans*).
2. *Aedes vexans* is the nuisance mosquito that we are seeing at this time of year (spring and early summer). While these mosquitoes may be pesky, they typically are not carriers of WNV, thus the risk of becoming infected is low.
3. *Culex tarsalis* is the mosquito that most often spreads WNV in South Dakota. This species does not become more numerous until mid-summer, even with all the rain we have experienced. The

greatest risk for contracting WNV is from mid-July through mid-August.

### Protect yourself

1. Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, in early morning and early evening.
2. Wear long sleeves and pants.
3. Use personal mosquito repellents such as DEET or Picaridin. Start now and use until first frost. Use products as directed.
4. Clean up the yard to avoid pools of standing water.
5. Repair damaged screens.

SDSU, SDDOH, and SDDOA are working with communities throughout the state in developing their mosquito control programs to assure cost effectiveness and the greatest level of control possible.

Communities need to monitor standing water, drain what can be drained and use larvacide as soon as the water situation stabilizes.

Remember: No control program will kill all mosquitoes. It is still the responsibility of individuals to take precautions on their own behalf and that of their family.

Sources: South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service and South Dakota Department of Health

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